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"MAINTAINING FERTILITY ON KENTUCKY FARMS"

Broadcast No. 21 in a series  
of discussions of soil con-  
servation in the Ohio Valley.

WLW, Cincinnati

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usual hour, 6:00 P.M., E.S.T.  
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE  
Dayton, Ohio



SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ANNOUNCER

Much has happened in historic, hilly, Hardin County, Kentucky, since 1780--since the autumn days when Thomas Helm, Andrew Hynes, and Samuel Haycraft crossed the browning fields to build their log cabins where Elizabethtown now stands. Abraham Lincoln was born in Hardin County. Here dwelled his predecessor in the White House, James Buchanan. Here dwelled John Audubon..... Keeping the thin soils of Hardin County from washing away has long been a problem--a problem that has been solved by such progressive farmers as Fred C. Tabb, of White Mills.....

SOUND: Axe sharpened against grindstone.

MR. TABB

Hmmm.....gettin' sharp, all right.

SOUND: Axe applied to grindstone.

SOUND: Turkey gobbling.

MR. TABB

Now, now.....don't look at me that way. (chuckles) This hurts me more than it does you.

SOUND: Turkey gobbling.

MR. TABB (Laughs)

Well, they ought to be here before long.....So Fred is married! Couldn't have picked a better girl, though. Glad he married a girl from around here.

SOUND: Auto horn (then laughter and shouts of man and woman.)

MR. TABB

Hey! You slipped up on me!



SOUND: Car door opens.

FRED

Hello, dad, how's everything?

FLORINE

Hello, Mr. Tabb.....or, father, now.

MR. TABB (kisses her on cheek and turkey gobbles)

How are you, Florine? Welcome to your new home.

FLORINE

I don't think that turkey is glad to see us.

FRED

No wonder! He's going to be the fatted calf for the prodigal son  
who's come back home. (All laugh)

ORGAN:

SOUND: Dinner dishes through following scene.

FRED

Gee, dad, it's good to be back on the farm. How is it, still the  
same old farm?

MR. TABB

Yes, just about as good as ever. That slope back over there across  
the draw started to wash again this spring, but I planted some  
Korean and timothy on it. That stopped it.

FRED

You limed it first, didn't you?

MR. TABB

Oh, yes, lime and phosphate both. That's the number one farming  
principle on this place, you know.

FLORINE

More turkey, Fred?







FRED

Please, Florine.

FLORINE

You, Mr. ---, father?

MR. TABB

No, thanks, had plenty.

FLORINE

There .

MR. TABB

Well, Fred, I'm gettin' along in years--not as spry as I used to be.

FRED

You can still stow away the food. (All laugh)

MR. TABB

No, seriously. I want you to run the farm from now on.

FRED

That's a big order, dad. Oh, of course I've worked on it ever since I was born, but.....

MR. TABB

And you can run it, My father cleared this farm. He kept it productive. He passed it on to me. Heaven knows, I've tried to keep it productive, too. And there's darn few gullies on the place.

FLORINE

That's more than you can say for a lot of farms in Hardin County.

FRED

You're right, Florine. Well, dad, I'll do all I can to keep the farm up.



MR. TABB

I know you will, my boy.

ORGAN:

SOUND: Screen door opens and closes. Fred sets down 2 buckets of milk.

FRED

There's the milk over by the separator.

FLORINE

All right.

SOUND: Meat frying in skillet.

FLORINE

This ham smells good, doesn't it?

FRED

Yeah, and I'm starved.....Oh, say, Florine, I stopped by the CCC camp at E-town today.

FLORINE

You did?

FRED

Yes, I've been hearing about some of their erosion control work so I stopped in to see what it was all about.

FLORINE

They build dams in gullies and plant trees, don't they?

FRED

More than that. From what Mr. Buskirk said, they re-plan farms to prevent soil erosion on every field.

FLORINE

Why, we don't have any erosion? Not a gully.



FRED

Yes, we have, Florine. No gullies, maybe, but there's quite a lot of sheet erosion. Not bad, because, well, we've been doing some of the same things they suggest, like liming and fertilizing, and keeping steep slopes in permanent pasture and meadow.

FLORINE

And you follow your corn with a winter cover crop. I know that much about soil conservation.

SOUND: Meat comes off stove.

FRED

Cover crops are mighty important. But what I started to say, was, we do have some sheet erosion. Anyhow, I asked Mr. Buskirk to come out and look the farm over.

ORGAN: NICE WORK IF YOU CAN GET IT.

ANNOUNCER

And today, when many neighboring fields are gullied, brown, overgrown with sassafras, Fred Tabb looks out over one of the most fertile farms in rolling Hardin County, Kentucky.

SOUND: Rocking chair creaking.

MR. TABB

You've been operating this farm, how long, Fred?

FRED

Eight years, dad.

FLORINE (reminiscing)

Eight years.

MR. TABB

You've done a lot to the old place.





FRED

The best thing I ever did was to re-plan the farm on a soil-saving basis. See that corn field over there?

MR. TABB

Looks nice. No washing in it.

FRED

Those buffer strips of sod are doing the work. Don't know why I didn't think of them myself.

SOUND: Dynamite blast in distance.

FLORINE

Oh! What's that?

FRED

That's the CCC crew down there blasting limestone. I bought the dynamite yesterday. I'm going to lime every acre on this farm.

FLORINE

Pastures, too?

FRED

Every acre. I may be a crank on looks, but I'm going to keep this land covered--and it won't be covered with gullies, either. You know, Charlie Nelson and I went to school at Bowling Green together, and we've got a little friendly rivalry up.

MR. TABB

Well, now, he's got a nice looking place. I like that strip cropping.

FRED

Yes, and it's working fine. Our fields aren't suitable for stripping, but, dad--did you ever stop to think what we have got in the way of soil conservation?





MR. TABB

Well.....

FRED

More than 200 acres of contour cultivation; 60 acres of steep land taken out of cultivation and put in permanent meadow and pasture...

FLORINE

....and they're contour furrowed.

FRED

And our woodlands are protected from fire and grazing. We have a 5-year rotation, buffer strips, controlled grazing in our pastures....

MR. TABB (laughing)

Yes, you can go on, I know. Liming, fertilizing, sink-hole structures, and all that. Why, one of the boys said to me the other day, "Mr. Tabb, your farm is like an oasis in a desert." Well, Fred, I'm proud of that but I'd be prouder if the whole county looked just like it.

ORGAN:

ANNOUNCER

Soil conservation has become a community problem and now, here is Ewing Jones from the Soil Conservation Service, in Dayton. Something tells me he knows about this thing called cooperation.

JONES

Thank you, \_\_\_\_\_, for that customary lengthy introduction. Mr. Tabb's farm does show quite a comparison with some other farms in that part of Hardin County--anyhow, it shows what can be done if proper soil conservation methods are used. But first, I'd like to mention that several thousand CCC boys in soil conservation camps here in the Ohio Valley are listening in with unusual interest this afternoon.



ANNOUNCER

And what's the unusual angle, Ewing?

JONES

Why, \_\_\_\_\_, at the conclusion of this broadcast they're each going to write an essay on the subject of the day, and the winner is going to be given a day in Cincinnati, with the ball game, and all that. And here's a tip to those boys: a man can install a soil conservation plan on his own farm. But he can't control erosion on his neighbor's farm. In other words, the best approach to the soil erosion control problem is through cooperative efforts--through community action.

ANNOUNCER

I've read that a number of states have recently passed the standard soil conservation districts law, which enables farmers to organize.

JONES

Yes, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Pennsylvania--to name a few right around here. That seems to be the present trend in the soil conservation movement, and I know of no man here in the Ohio Valley who is better qualified to diagnose the modern trend toward soil conservation than J. S. Cutler. Mr. Cutler is regional head of the Soil Conservation Service here in the Ohio Valley, so Mr. Cutler, won't you give us some of your ideas on this district approach to the problem?

CUTLER

Certainly, Ewing, I'll be glad to. But while you're giving tips to these CCC boys, let me add one of my own. In each of the camp libraries, you'll find a bulletin: Soil Conservation Districts. I suggest that you read that bulletin, and you'll get a better understanding of the problem.





ANNOUNCER

If I may break in, Mr. Cutler, I'd like to ask if that bulletin is available for public distribution. I should imagine that every farmer, every landowner, or everyone who has any contact with agriculture, would want to read that bulletin on soil conservation districts.

CUTLER

I'm sure they would, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, and I'm surprised that Ewing hasn't mentioned that already.

JONES

I suppose that's my cue. All right. Copies of the bulletin, "Soil Conservation Districts," may be secured by writing to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio.

ANNOUNCER

That ought to settle that point, but just to make sure I'll repeat it: write to Soil Conservation, at Dayton, for a copy of the bulletin on districts. Now, Mr. Cutler.

CUTLER

Well, Ewing has asked for my ideas on the districts movement. In recent years we have changed our attitude toward the land. We used to think that the way a man handled his land was of no concern to anyone but himself.

JONES

But since the supply of free land has become exhausted, we've changed that idea.





CUTLER

Quite definitely. It has become a matter of public concern. Millions and millions of acres of valuable farmland have been ruined by erosion. Millions more are being injured every day.

JONES

And the injury doesn't stop on the farm.

CUTLER

By no means. You follow the trail of advanced erosion, and you'll see impoverished families and communities, because erosion strikes at the very heart of a community. You'll see damaged roads, highways, and railroads. You'll see clogged reservoirs and stream channels. You'll see erosion destroying food and cover for wildlife. You'll see floods.

ANNOUNCER

I can see how society in general has an interest in how farmlands are handled. Just like that farmer from the new district in Ottawa County, Michigan, Mr. Hendrycks, said when he was down here on one of the programs: "I can take care of my land, but if my neighbor doesn't take care of his own, what can I do?"

CUTLER

That's where the soil conservation districts laws come in. You see, \_\_\_\_\_, rain is a natural force. Run-off water, as we've said many times before, is no respecter of man-made boundaries. To run-off water pouring downhill, the imaginary boundary line separating one man's land from that of another means absolutely nothing.



JONES

That means that farmers must cooperate, and from reports I've heard from Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Georgia--other states which have passed the laws--they are cooperating in a big way.

CUTLER

They've found that they had to. Of course, the law varies from state to state, but the basic principle of the soil conservation districts law is to put the responsibility for formulating and carrying out an erosion-control program squarely upon the shoulders of local people.

JONES

Then the whole thing is a cooperative project. No district is formed unless the people want it, and once the district is formed, the control of its affairs still rests in the hands of local people. But I'm still a bit hazy on one point, Mr. Cutler, where do state and federal agencies come in?

CUTLER

Their role is that of a cooperator. The district supervisors, in every case, will need some technical assistance. They may need the benefit of the discoveries of the state agricultural experiment station and the extension service. They may need the benefit of the experience the Soil Conservation Service has had on similar areas. If they need this help, they must first ask for it.

JONES

And the work done on the districts is pretty much the same as that being done on Soil Conservation Service demonstration projects.

CUTLER

In a sense, Ewing, yes. The cooperative erosion-control program presupposes that each acre will be put to the use to which it is best adapted. I think you know those uses.





JONES

In general. Erodible slopes would be retired to grass or trees, and cultivated crops would be restricted to the less erodible slopes. Sloping fields would be protected by such safeguards as strip cropping, terracing, and other measures.

CUTLER

That's the general idea, of course, but every area differs slightly from every other area, and local adaptations must be made where the conditions call for them. Undoubtedly this program will transform agriculture in many ways, but a transformation is absolutely necessary if we are to check soil erosion. And this program can succeed only through cooperative effort, neighbor with neighbor, community with community.

JONES

And that in itself is an inspiring thought. Thank you, Mr. J. S. Cutler, regional conservator of the Soil Conservation Service, for your picture of the present trend in the soil conservation program. And I agree with you and with \_\_\_\_\_, everyone ought to read that bulletin, "Soil Conservation Districts for Erosion Control."

ANNOUNCER

Copies of the bulletin, "Soil Conservation Districts," may be secured by writing to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio. Next week, "The Little Old Lady by the Side of the Mill."

SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away is an educational presentation of the Nation's Station.

